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SUBJECT: [TURKEY](#): TECHNICAL GLITCH SAID TO RUPTURE KIRKUK-CEYHAN PIPELINE

REF: ANKARA 1914

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. Media report on the afternoon of November 5, a technical malfunction triggered a rupture in the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline near the Bozova district of Sanliurfa province. An MFA source told us the cause of the accident was technical, while a BOTAS official preferred to wait for the results of an ongoing investigation before commenting. A former BOTAS official speculated these types of accidents may be the result of a strained budget situation at BOTAS (reftel). According to reports, crude oil has seeped over an area of 5 kilometers, reaching the shores of the artificial lake created by the Ataturk Dam. A local contact confirmed press reports that water had been cut off to residences in the affected areas, including Sanliurfa city. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Local press report at approximately 1530 on November 5, residents of Yalintas village heard an explosion on the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. (Note: This pipeline is operated by state-owned pipeline monopoly BOTAS and it carries Iraqi oil to the port of Ceyhan. End note.) Director of State Waterworks at the Ataturk Dam Gungor Gurkan confirmed online news that the burst was caused by an abrupt shift in pressure and not by sabotage or an act of terrorism.

¶3. (SBU) MFA Energy Department Head Berris Ekinici told us the GOT currently believes the cause of the accident was technical. The Deputy for Natural Gas and Petroleum Operations at BOTAS, Ruhi Aksoy, said BOTAS is currently investigating the accident and he declined to speculate on the cause before the team finishes its assessment.

¶4. (SBU) Former BOTAS Department Head for International Affairs and current General Manager for E.ON Ruhrgas in Turkey, Dr. Cenk Pala also told us he believes the cause was technical. Pala hypothesized that BOTAS's strained financial situation is taking its toll on the company. GOT-owned enterprises owe BOTAS more than USD 8 billion (including interest) according to Pala. BOTAS is operating on a shoe-string budget and has not been able to provide the necessary training for staff or maintenance for pipelines. Additionally, BOTAS is losing qualified staff to private companies.

¶5. (U) Online images show heavy plumes of black smoke spiraling from a controlled fire set by local officials to prevent crude oil from further seeping into the already contaminated two-kilometers of river bed. According to the press, fires are expected to burn for two days after which BOTAS Petroleum Pipeline Corporation, the pipeline's operating company, reportedly will require at least five days to assess and fix the damage.

¶6. (U) While the environmental impact assessment is ongoing, Sanliurfa Human Rights Association Chairman Sedat Gozkiran told us the Ataturk Dam Irrigation Union reported a "serious amount" of oil had leaked into the reservoir and that residential water supplies had been shut off by the state. Media report a

30-kilometer oil slick now covers protected areas for the local softshell Euphrates turtle and fish population.

17. (SBU) Comment. The Kirkuk-Ceyhan (also known as Kirkuk-Yumurtalik) pipeline, spanning over 1850 kilometers between Iraq and its ending point in the Mediterranean terminus in Turkey has experienced periodic sabotage over the past five years. At this point, there is no reason to believe the accident was the result of sabotage. The pipeline has been performing well this past year, with BOTAS reporting over 100 million barrels flowing between January and September. End comment.

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